

CHAPTER X

LETTERS ON DECADENCE; WEALTH; BIEDS;
HUMOR IN
POLITICS; CLEVELAND; LIBEL SUIT; THE
NAVY

ROOSEVELT'S correspondence during the spring and summer of 1908 shows the usual wide variety of interests. Always a patient listener, his remarkable alertness of mind which enabled him to foresee clearly the end of a talker's discourse long before the talker himself had arrived at it, frequently put his patience to a severe strain. Writing to Henry Adams, on March. 9, 1908, he gives a hint of his sufferings at times: "Of course I have read your grandfather's diary; but I have at once sent for another copy to reread in part about those years. There was just two years' interval, then, between his Presidency and his nominal appearance in Congress. O Lord! I wish I did not sympathize with him and the rest of his family about being bored! The capacity to be bored, whether treated as a sin or a misfortune, is an awful handicap."

The extraordinary range of Roosevelt's reading and knowledge is revealed in a letter which he wrote to the Et. Hon. A. J. Balfour, at the moment when he was in the very thick of Mr. struggle with Congress for further legislation in regard to governmental control and regulations of corporations and when his daily correspondence was crowded with protests against his course. How many other men of his time, in or out of public life, could have written such a letter as this! I append it in full.

WHITE HOUSE,
March 5,

1908.

*My dear Mr. **Balf our**:*

Through Arthur Lee I have just received the
copy of
"Decadence/¹ and thank you for it. I confess
I began to